



Maintenance, administration biggest casualties of school budget cuts

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Throughout California, state budget reductions over the past two years have ravaged schools, prompting districts to make tough calls about where to make cuts.

Maintenance, instructional materials and district administrative costs were the top three casualties as school districts trimmed millions, according to a statewide survey tracking where schools cut the most. The survey was released Thursday by the California Department of Education.

"The survey results make clear that school administrators are making heart-rending decisions to balance their dwindling budgets while trying valiantly to keep students' best interests in mind," said Jack O'Connell, state superintendent of public instruction, in a news release. "These deep cuts to our schools were made even though the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act provided critical funds to save education jobs last year. These funds are now running out, and our state budget picture continues to look bleak."

State officials asked administrators in school districts, county offices of education and charter schools how they had balanced their budgets. The survey was returned by 387 agencies, representing

26 percent of statewide enrollment.

Nearly half of respondents reduced the number of teachers, cut art and music classes, and eliminated school nurse positions, while about one-third increased class sizes, eliminated electives, and closed libraries, the survey found.

Local districts are no exception.

The Oakland school

district has cut more than 500 full-time jobs, about 10 percent of its workforce, as it grapples with a budget deficit that has grown to more than \$100 million. In response to child care cuts proposed by the governor last month, the district might dramatically reduce its all-day preschool program for working parents and close most of its remaining adult education programs.

In Contra Costa County, the Mt. Diablo school district has sent pink slips to nearly 200 teachers and is trying to cut \$9.8 million a year through furloughs and reduced benefits that still need to be negotiated with unions. But since districts must adopt their budgets by June 30, other cuts may be necessary if employees do not accept concessions soon, said trustee Dick Allen.

The board on Tuesday may slash nearly \$1.7 million a year by cutting the jobs of about 30 special education assistants. But a \$348 million facilities bond measure passed last Tuesday is expected to free up about \$1.4 million a year for operations by paying off leases and other short-term bonds.

In January, the Mt. Diablo board expects to vote on closing or consolidating at least four schools in 2

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011-12 to help offset future anticipated reductions. The Governor's May revised budget proposes another \$1.5 billion in general-purpose funding education funding cuts, O'Connell said.

Allen said he expects the public to start noticing the effects of cuts when students return to larger classes with fewer electives and adults on campuses in the fall.

"I'm concerned about what's going to happen next year because of the cuts we've already made," he said. "I just don't know where it's going to end. Honest to gosh, I don't know how much more we can cut."

Staff writer Katy Murphy contributed to this report.

BY THE NUMBERS

Surveyed schools made the most cuts in the following categories:

- **Building, grounds maintenance: 65 percent**
 - **District administration: 58 percent**
 - **Instructional materials: 58 percent**
 - **Counselors, Nurses, Psychologists: 48 percent**
 - **Art, music and drama: 48 percent**
- Information: For complete results, go to www.cde.ca.gov.**
- Source: California Department of Education**

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